

In closing, Mr. Speaker, for our ally Israel, for our U.S. service men and women, and for the rights of free democracies everywhere, there is no time to lose.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Ohio (Ms. KAPTUR) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. KAPTUR addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. JONES) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. JONES addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. BURTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. BURTON of Indiana addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Kansas (Mr. MORAN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. MORAN of Kansas addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

THE PROGRESSIVE MESSAGE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 2009, the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. ELLISON) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. ELLISON. Mr. Speaker, my name is Congressman KEITH ELLISON, and I am here to claim the time on behalf of the Progressive Message which comes to the American people every Thursday night to discuss critical issues and a progressive perspective on these same issues. The Progressive Message is put on and organized by Progressive Caucus members who happen to represent one of the largest caucuses in the Congress.

The purpose of this message is to focus on critical issues from a progressive perspective. That means a perspective that all Americans are welcome and included; that we need civil rights, human rights; we need economic justice for working people and working families; we need to address poverty; and we need to address peace in the world; the idea that America, a country blessed, could help bestow blessings on other people in the world through example and not through imposition; the idea that the United States, a country blessed, can help demonstrate through an example what human rights can do, what respect for the rule of law

can do, what respect for human rights, women's rights can do. The Progressive Caucus is an instrument through which progressive ideas are shared.

Tonight what we want to talk about, Mr. Speaker, is jobs. Absolutely that's the topic tonight. Jobs is what we will be talking about. I would like to hear from anyone who might be listening later on what their perspective is on the jobs picture and what we can do about it.

Mr. Speaker, the unemployment rate is 10.2 percent at this time. It could well climb higher by the end of the year. The fact is we have a jobs crisis, we have a jobs emergency, and we must do something about it now.

It's important to point out that as much as people who are unemployed need jobs, and they do, other people who are employed also need the unemployed to get jobs. It's important to bear in mind that when people are not working, their income goes down, their purchases at the store go down, their ability to consume and buy things that they need goes down, and if the store isn't selling, then the store can't put on more workers; they may even have to lay some off.

So this unemployment problem actually puts downward pressure on demand which puts other businesses who do have employees on the payroll in a position where they have to reconsider that.

Not only is the lack of a paycheck detrimental to the family that is not employed, but it also creates generational problems and it creates problems for the person who's unemployed, because when the economy turns around and they can get back in a position where they can maybe find that job, the employer is going to ask, Hey, what was going on with you over the last 3 years? Or 2 years? Or 6 months? And that hole in the resume has real consequences for that worker which may extend over the course of that person's lifetime.

Obviously, when unemployment is chronic and people are out of work for long stretches of time, their children sometimes are impacted by this and have to not only go with lower family income, which is obviously harmful to their development, but still are in a position where they have seen a parent go jobless for quite a long time which disadvantages them in terms of their ability to know how to access the job market and their hope, prospect and optimism as it relates to getting work. So unemployment is a problem, we've got to do something about it, and it is time to act.

Though the Democratic Caucus and Congress did not create the situation, and it certainly wasn't created overnight, it does need to be fixed very soon. Ten months of the new leadership of the White House cannot eclipse that of nearly 10 years of George Bush and the Republican Congress who bankrupted the public trust.

After nearly a decade of handing over middle-class tax dollars to the wealthy

est 1 percent, we've now got to take real action for working Americans. After nearly a decade of a policy that encouraged multimillion-dollar CEO bonuses over raises for American workers, we've got to do something about the job picture in America.

The economic policies of the last 10 years put President Obama and this Congress in a situation where it may not have been a situation of our making, but it is a problem that we have responsibility to correct. We're not going to say that, Yeah, we got handed two wars; yeah, we got handed hundreds of billions of dollars of debt, a crumbling infrastructure, a home mortgage foreclosure crisis—one out of eight mortgages is in default—a global climate crisis, and a financial sector ravaged by greed and lax regulation.

We're not going to rely on any excuse. We're going to get after the problem, and we're going to do it now. In short, the greatest economic and financial crisis since the Great Depression is visiting the American economy right now and people are feeling it, and it's time to do something about it.

This is why we are proposing, and I am proposing, and I am encouraging other people to support a jobs bill that would do a few things: American jobs. Invest in transportation and schools. Schools all over America are crumbling. Schools all over America have old pipes. Schools all over America are drafty and need windows replaced and the paint is peeling in many of them, not all of them but many of them. And any school teacher, any principal or any school kid can tell you that.

We need people to do the work. We have people who are willing to do the work, and we have things that need to be worked on. What we have to do is bring the two together: invest in transportation, including transit, urban transportation, light rail, and schools. This is an urgent problem, it needs fixing, and people need work. Let's pay them to do it.

State and local government relief. All over this country, States and cities and localities are having to cut back on services that they provide to their citizens. Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger has taken the public circle and said without the stimulus package, a hundred thousand teachers in California would be out of work. So that was an example of a good thing. But it's not nearly enough.

We need more to be done, because in this era and in this time, we see local governments having to lay off police officers, firefighters, public works people, teachers. We can't allow this to happen. State governments and local governments around the country are facing serious deficits and the Federal Government should step in to help.

We also need to strengthen safety nets. During times of economic downturn, there's greater pressure on our food shelves, greater pressure on our clothing shelves; and we need to understand that when unemployment runs

out, a lot of families are just left without. What are we going to do about it? We need to extend unemployment benefits, food stamps and programs like that; and I just want to let folks know that this is economically, from an economic standpoint, it's not just good work, it's not just charitable, it's not just the right thing to do.

It also is very, very important to stimulate the economy. Because when you give somebody food stamps, they take that and they go right to the store and they purchase groceries for their family. What does that do for the grocery store that is receiving that coupon that can redeem that for money? It's helping that grocery store. What is that doing for that grocer who is thinking about whether he or she has to lay off a few workers because people just aren't coming in and buying like they used to because the economy is down? Well, it helps them keep those people on the job. And if we do well enough, it might even actually help them add some people on the job.

What happens if that store has to lay off a few folks and we don't come through with some of these basics? What happens is they have to lay off some folks, and now you've got more people on unemployment insurance. If they can't find a job within the right amount of time, then those people are just without, and they are putting pressure on the food pantries and the food shelves and they're just really suffering. These things have a ripple effect.

What I am saying is if you can think of a coupon, a food stamp coupon, as not a piece of paper that can get you some food, think of it as a rock that you throw into a pond. I'm saying that that food stamp coupon and that unemployment insurance has a ripple effect that is very strong, and the multiplier effect of that is good because it gets right into the economy. It gets right into the economy to help people make their basic needs and also helps fuel the retail sector and then all the way back to the wholesale sector.

This is basically just a few things that we could do right now to alleviate real pain people are suffering all over this country. We've got to act, we've got to do something about it; and we cannot say that things that were done in the past, although a lot of bad decisions, economic decisions, were made over the last 8 years, and the Obama administration and this Congress are trying to fix it. We can't rely on that. We've got to do something about it now. The American people deserve answers, especially the people who have been chronically unemployed.

Today the White House is hosting, or has hosted already, an economic summit to discuss how to move the economy forward. This is good news. It's the President taking responsibility for dealing with the needs of Americans. I admire that tremendously. The fact is we do need more public jobs.

□ 1545

There's broad support and work moving to respond to the need for American jobs. I want to commend the Campaign for America's Future, the AFL-CIO, SEIU, and other labor organizations and groups that come together to help people, but also many employers and many small businesses who are out there concerned about employment.

This era that we're in, which I believe can fairly be called the "great recession," has wreaked havoc on American communities, as I just mentioned. And I just want to point out we face a period of extended unemployment if we don't act now.

Now, some people think, okay, the economy goes up and the economy goes down. But the fact is that the economy is a social institution, and unless people in society do something about it, the business cycle won't necessarily go up and include more jobs. We've got to do that. That's something that we need to work on. So we need to help small businesses get greater lending. We need to invest in public jobs. We need to invest in public infrastructure. We need to make these kinds of investments so that Americans can get back to work and the economy can get moving again.

Many of you watching television and watching the nightly business news may note that, well, Wall Street seems to be kind of moving in the right direction. That's good for them. But the fact is the average American worker is under tremendous anxiety because they know that they might be next. And as one former Republican President once said, a recession is when your neighbor's out of work; a depression is when you are out of work. And for 10.2 percent of American workers, this is a depression, and we need to get on that and deal with it right away.

Let me point out just a few other things. This has precedent in the United States. This is not something new for our country. We have stepped forward in the past. In fact, I was in my beautiful State of Minnesota after I enjoyed the great victory over the Chicago Bears by the Minnesota Vikings. And I went for a walk, and I saw that there was a picnic table that had written on it "WPA 1934." Americans in the past have stepped forward and dealt with American crises. In the 1930s and again in the 1970s we responded to extraordinary hardship by adding jobs, jobs, to the array of programs and services designed to help our people and to help the economy move out of recession.

The program that we envision today would provide work to the jobless and meet the needs in our communities by helping people meet their everyday needs and boost demand, which would help speed economic recovery. A new jobs program would be run by local elected officials who are closest to communities and best understand their needs. Local communities best understand the needs of the local community. So it wouldn't be Congress saying

this many jobs for Head Start, this many jobs for that. It would be Congress sending funds to State and local governments that then those local governments could use to determine what is needed. And, of course, there are a lot of things that are needed.

Some of the projects that are needed are paint and repair of schools, as I mentioned before. Peeling paint, community centers and libraries. You would be surprised what you might find if you went to a local library. You might find some local libraries are not in good repair. That's because they were built years and years ago and are in need of an upgrade.

We need to clean up abandoned and vacant properties to alleviate the blight that's been caused by the foreclosure crisis. As everyone knows, we went through a major foreclosure crisis, and it's not over. But what's the reality of this situation? The reality is you have abandoned houses which people could live in if these places were maintained and upgraded. But some of them have seen the copper stripped out. Some of them have seen the grass grow long. Some of them have seen the windows knocked out. Unemployed people could be hired to help maintain these properties through a jobs program. This is important all over the country. Even if you want to make sure that these buildings are secured and boarded until somebody can buy them, these are things that are important.

Remember, whenever there is a foreclosure on a property, two bad things happen. One is, somebody is out of their house, and those people are not paying property taxes like they used to in the past. But not only is the city not just getting property tax income anymore, the city now also has to pay out in order to maintain that property. So they don't just lose money, they actually now have an expense that they have to deal with when you have a foreclosure. That's why we need people to get employed to maintain these properties, and this is something that local communities might have to do with this money.

We need to expand emergency food programs and reduce hunger and promote family stability. Did you know, Mr. Speaker, that one in five children in America are in poverty? In America one in five children in poverty. Children of all colors, children of all cultures, children of all faiths. This is something our country has to respond to. And for so many of these children in poverty today in this massive recession we're in, these are children who may not have parents who are in a union, which would probably guarantee them a higher wage, and that's why I support unions, or our public employees like teachers and police officers.

Many of these folks are just the hard-working folks out there who keep the playground safe and clean, who keep the city in good repair. Folks who work at the Head Start and people who

do child care and people who do these tough jobs every single day. Some of these folks, they may not have a big degree or a big certificate, but they need to earn good money. They need to have a good job. And maybe that job is the one thing that could keep and lift that family out of poverty so that one of those children who is among the one in five in poverty won't have to be in poverty for too long.

We could augment staffing at Head Start, child care, early childhood education programs, senior centers, and promote school readiness and early literacy. We could renovate and enhance maintenance of parks, playgrounds and other public spaces, as I just said. The program we envision could place special emphasis on delivering job opportunities and needed services to low-income communities and communities of color suffering depression-level unemployment and distress.

Everybody in this economy is hurting. Well, not everybody. Some of these Wall Streeters are getting big bonuses. They're not hurting. But the rest of us are really fighting out here, and it's not easy. Small business owners, a lot of folks are getting hurt. But as nearly everybody is feeling the pain in this economy, it's important for us to remember that there are some folks who are feeling it even more painfully than the average. I want to point out that unemployment among African Americans in August was not the 15.2 percent that I mentioned for the general economy, but it was 15.7 percent. That's serious. A very serious problem. Unemployment for people who are of Hispanic background is 13.1 percent. If you're talking about young people, African American and Latino young people who are between the ages of 16 and 30, we're talking about unemployment upwards of 35 percent.

So we've got to do something in these chronically marginalized communities where people are just left out there and are often a second thought when we form public policy to address serious issues. We've got to deal with this. And that's why we need a program, yes, to build up infrastructure. Let's get those union guys back out there on the field making our roads, making our infrastructure, building those things up. And absolutely let's get those public employees back in. Let's not let the teachers and the cops get laid off. But let's not forget about that young teenager of color who is out there without any prospect. We don't want young people turning in the wrong direction; we want them staying in the right direction.

While I mentioned statistics for African American and Hispanic young people, don't think for a minute that young white people in rural communities and even in urban communities are not having elevated unemployment rates as well. The youth are being unemployed at higher rates than other people regardless of background, and we've got to step up and do something

about it. And we can do something about it. We still have over \$200 billion of TARP money and stimulus dollars, and these need, I think, to be directed to employment programs similar to what we did in the 1930s and in the 1970s when Americans were out of work.

I want to say that, yes, it's true that one in five, or about 20 percent, of all young people in America are living in poverty, but one in three African American young people are living in poverty. A serious issue. Their parents need work, and we've got to do something about it. If we act quickly, a jobs program like this could put hundreds of thousands of people of various skill levels to work during the next year, 2010, and will continue to provide job opportunities for several years as our economy recovers. People paying taxes, which can help lower the deficit. People who are paying child support or are just paying the monthly expenses of their family. This is all very important. The time to act is now. I propose, and I think we should all support, a program that could create 1 million American jobs in very short order if we put about \$40 billion into it.

The time to act is now, to make that investment. We need to make this investment if we want to lower the deficit. We need to make this investment if we want to increase demand. We need to make this investment if we want to keep people from being chronically unemployed.

Let me now turn to another important part of what I believe any job recovery program must include, and that is the need for critical infrastructure development. I have been talking about lower-wage workers so far. Now I want to talk a little bit about infrastructure development. Do you know that if you look across America, you look across the roads and you look across the bridges, you look across transit and you look across some of these aging sewer lines and even fiber optic, and if you look at the needs of rural communities across America who need to get wired in on broadband, we're looking at well over about \$3 trillion of infrastructure needs in our country.

And the beautiful thing about spending this kind of money to invest in American infrastructure is that it stays here. These are not jobs that are going abroad. These are going to be American jobs because you can't lay fiber-optic cable in America in some other country. It's going to be here. That person's going to be paid here. That person's going to be employed here. And that money is going to go into the United States and be funneled back to Americans. This is important to understand—that infrastructure investment is critical to lifting our economy out of this very difficult economic situation, and we have to do it anyway.

I'm very excited about this idea of investing in infrastructure in broadband in rural communities. You know that it was in the 1930s when visionary po-

litical leaders like Franklin Delano Roosevelt said, You know what, there's no reason why rural America should be in the dark. Rural electrification, an idea conceived when the United States was in a depression. Now, some people who think that bold action could only be taken when things are good economically, they have to contend with the fact that bold action was taken when we had a depression in the 1930s, bold action like rural electrification. And what rural electrification did was it brightened up rural communities all over the United States. We put up the telephone lines all across this country so that you could flick on a light in rural America.

What it did was it absolutely improved the economic viability of rural America. People no longer had to move into the crowded city when they could do their business in the electrified rural areas. This is important to bear in mind. It's critical to bear in mind that critical jobs in infrastructure have been built in America even during times of economic downturn. Very important.

Community infrastructure programs creating over a million jobs, a million jobs at the community and neighborhood level, is what we need now. We need these kinds of programs so we can create immediate opportunity, so we could create infrastructure.

I just want to tell you I'm from the city of Minneapolis, and from my great city of Minneapolis, we had on August 4, 2007, a bridge collapse into the Mississippi River. Thirteen Minneapolitans died and a hundred had injuries like spinal cord injuries as they fell 65 feet from the bridge to the water. Now, at the end of the day, this crisis and this tragedy occurred because we did not maintain that infrastructure well enough. Now, I'm not saying it's anybody's fault. I'm sure everybody did the best they could. But the fact is if we would have had a stronger infrastructure commitment that would make bridges around this country a priority to repair and to fix and to rebuild, this tragedy may not have happened. But it did happen.

□ 1600

But it did happen, and so we put out a clarion call for infrastructure development in our country. And I say, we need to do this anyway. We need to develop infrastructure so we can avoid horrible tragedies like the one that happened in my city. But more importantly, or as importantly, we need to do it now to put Americans back to work.

During the first 6 to 9 months, if we can pass a good, solid community infrastructure program, the program could develop a fast track for jobs. Projects could be limited to certain activities such as key priorities. And within a short amount of time, we could see these infrastructure developments paying great dividends for Americans.

You know, I want to talk to you about some of the things that we have been seeing in our economy that really do cause a tremendous amount of pause, and I think it is something that we need to really, really pay some close attention to. These are trends in our economy that I just feel that we need to pay some greater attention to, and this is not in a way of just describing what we should do, but it is kind of talking about what we have done.

In the course of the last few weeks, we have seen people be highly critical of the stimulus package. I think we need to take a look back at what the stimulus package did. Some people, because it has not stopped the increase in unemployment, say that it didn't work. I say this is an incorrect analysis. I believe the Recovery Act has actually helped a lot of people stay employed and actually stopped this economic crisis from getting worse and slowed the rate of unemployment. But we need to do more. But let's just say what the Recovery Act did do.

The Recovery Act created over a million jobs. That's what it did do. It created over 250,000 education jobs. As I said, it was Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger who said that but for the stimulus, over 100,000 teachers would be out of work. Thirty thousand jobs were created or saved by businesses that have received Federal contracts from just a small fraction of the Recovery Act. That is very important.

Let me say that half a million homeowners have signed up for foreclosure prevention programs, reaching an important early goal. And the program that was launched last March aimed to help these half a million borrowers by November 1, with the ultimate goal of helping 4 million borrowers before it expires.

Here is a number for you. The Dow Jones industrial average surged to over 10,000, passing the 10,000 point level much faster than expected and racking up a 53 percent gain in the last 7 months. That is an improvement in the economy that has helped some but has not helped enough. But it just shows that if we do invest in our economy, it does help. It improves the lives of people. It is not money that we shouldn't have spent. Things would be much worse if we didn't spend that stimulus money and make those important public sector investments.

The number of road and bridge projects already approved under the Recovery Act, which creates jobs, is 8,000. The number of roads and bridges projects, 8,000 roads and bridges projects already underway because of the stimulus. And the percentage of spending that is now obligated under the Recovery Act, this money in the pipeline ready to be spent is about half, and this 50 percent mark exceeds the Congressional Budget Office's initial projection for the program, showing that investment is going out quickly to help boost the economy right away.

But still we have a job crisis, and still we have to do something about

this jobs crisis. And let me tell you a little more about how the Recovery Act has fared so far, because there has been a lot of disinformation about the Recovery Act. A lot of people have said that the President said it was going to stop unemployment at 8 percent, and it went up by 2 more percent. Leading economists say it would be 12 percent if the Recovery Act were not put in place. So let me just talk a little bit more about what this economic recovery has done, economic stimulus has done so far, and make a case for what more needs to be done.

A recent report from the Council of Economic Advisers shows that the Recovery Act and other policy actions have saved or created over a million jobs while only about a quarter of the Recovery Act spending has been able to get into the economy. But many projects are in the pipeline and are on their way. The report, this report by the Council of Economic Advisers, estimates that the Recovery Act has had particularly strong effects in manufacturing, construction, retail trade, and temporary employment services. The employment effects are distributed across States with larger effects in States more severely impacted. So States like Michigan, Ohio, even my own State of Minnesota, but others as well, are getting this important economic recovery money so that we can turn our economy around.

According to Jared Bernstein, who is the chief economist, Office of the Vice President, "All signs—from the private estimates to this fragmentary data—point to the conclusion that the Recovery Act did indeed create or save about 1 million jobs in its first 7 months, a much needed lift in a very difficult period for our economy," which is something that I think we must pay attention to and cannot ignore.

I just want to talk a little more about the success of the Recovery Act, not that it has completely succeeded. We would like to see unemployment headed down, not just the rate of unemployment slow down. But just to make sure that we understand that providing economic fiscal stimulus does help our economy, it is important to review the facts.

The Recovery Accountability and Transparency Board—and as you know, we didn't just spend money out, we got a transparency board to look at it all—released its first report on the portion of the Recovery Act spending that shows that recipients have reported that so far, the act is helping to get Americans back to work. As I said, Mark Zandi of Moody's Economics said 2 percent, we would have 2 percent greater unemployment but for the Recovery Act which is so important.

According to this report issued by the Recovery Accountability and Transparency Board, the act shows that businesses that received Federal contracts from stimulus spending reported creating or saving about 30,000 jobs. The board released a more exten-

sive report last month, which I will get to in a moment.

Now, I would like to talk a little bit now and just move on about this unemployment figure. I brought a graph with me that I would like to share with you, Mr. Speaker, and just show folks what we are looking at.

It is important that we talk about creating these jobs, as I just mentioned, the economic recovery and jobs that we are creating or working on. What this chart shows is that part of our strategy for job creation must be infrastructure, as I mentioned, and must also be creating public sector, public works jobs, which is important. But a third aspect is clean energy and green jobs. This is the visionary, forward-looking kind of job proposal that we need to pay attention to.

Investing \$150 billion in clean energy will create a net gain of 1 million jobs and improve opportunities for low-income families. These are jobs for the future. These are jobs for the next period. These are jobs for now and into the future. Clean energy jobs. Clean energy jobs created, 2,500 to 10,000 jobs across America, places in rural areas. And 10,000 to 50,000 jobs in these more darkly shaded areas where people live, sparser population but people need to work, and more than 50,000 jobs in the darkly shaded areas. As you can see, these are our industrial manufacturing sectors, places like Indiana, Michigan, and places like Illinois and Ohio, Pennsylvania, New York, Georgia, South Carolina, places like Florida, Texas, and California. This is a very important chart because a part of our conversation must revolve around what our job strategy is and what we expect to do in this period to create jobs for Americans.

You know, the thing is that jobs, having a job is one of the most important things that any person can do. A job is not just income, but a job also gives you pride and dignity. A job also is something that allows you to feel that you are making a contribution to society. A job. A job is something that you can go to and you can come home and look your kids in the eye and say, you know what, I put in, I am productive. This is what I have done to help you and to help our society be better.

It is important to do something about the millions of unemployed today, the people who are in the ranks of that 10.2 percent of unemployed, the people who are among the ranks of the 34 percent of minority teenagers and young adults who are unemployed. Those children, 1 in 5 children in America in poverty, 1 in 3 African American children in poverty in America today, below the poverty line, we can do something about it, and the time to do something about it is now. We cannot sit idly by while our fellow Americans are in an economic malaise. We have to have ideas that are designed to work, and we have to remember what has worked in the past, and we can't be afraid to reach for what can work now.

The fact is that we are asking Americans, Mr. Speaker, to step forward and support a real jobs package, one that will work, one that is new and innovative for green jobs, one that preserves and improves our infrastructure, and one that puts people to work and one that keeps State and local governments from having to lay off public employees. These programs will work. We need to do something for small businesses who are often the biggest job generators of all, and we need to do it now.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to say that this has been another hour of the Progressive message, another hour of the Progressive Caucus. Our email is cpc.grijalva.house.gov. We want to hear from the public, Mr. Speaker. We want to know what is on the public's mind, and we want to know how people are feeling. And we just want to remind people of the importance of the dignity of work and the obligation and responsibility of Americans who are in Congress to do something about this dismal job picture out there. I want to let the people know, Mr. Speaker, that we hear them. I want them to know that we haven't forgotten them, and I want to let them know that we are here to do something about the very difficult circumstances that people are facing.

So this will conclude the Progressive hour and the Progressive message. We will see you next week. Happy holidays, and enjoy.

□ 1615

WHERE ARE THE JOBS?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 2009, the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. WALDEN) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. WALDEN. Mr. Speaker, Republicans come to you today to talk about some of the same things that my colleague who just finished was talking about, but we are going to try and live it up a little bit. Because, you see, the Democrats have controlled the Congress for the last 3 years, not the last 10 months or 11 months, but the last 3 years. But in the last 11 months, Americans have lost 2.9 million jobs.

You see, they passed this so-called stimulus, and they rammed it through in record time. It is one of those thousand-page bills that probably nobody had a chance to read before it got voted on, and then they passed it. The theory was that if they passed it into law, that unemployment wouldn't top out over 8 percent. That was their promise. That's what the Democrats promised, was pass the stimulus and it will solve unemployment. It will be no more than 8 percent. In fact, that's what their Department of Labor, the Obama Department of Labor, said right here, you can see it, Obama forecast with stimulus, right here is where unemployment would be. This is without the stimulus

where unemployment would be at this point. These were their numbers. This is what they promised the American people. This is what they said.

Now, let's look at what really happened, however. Unemployment started out here in January of this year, 2009, whoa, up it goes. How high, nobody knows, but it goes on up and up and up over 10 percent, over 10 percent. Now who is benefiting from that? Well, let's, first of all, look at The Washington Post today. And right here on The Washington Post newspaper here in the Nation's Capital the top story is: "Stimulus is Boon for D.C. Area Contractors." Federal Departments are paying firms to help spend the money.

And let me read Alec MacGillis' story here. It says: "As struggling communities throughout the country wait for more help from the \$787 billion stimulus package, one region is already basking in its largess: the government-contractor nexus that is metropolitan Washington, D.C." That's right. Come on down. You are the winner, Washington, D.C. Once again, the Federal Government is the winner.

"Reports from stimulus recipients show that a sizable sum has gone to Federal contractors in the Washington area who are helping implement the initiative—in effect, they are being paid a hefty slice of the money to help spend the rest of it."

Now, if you want jobs for Washington, D.C.-based government contractors, I don't see how that is sustainable, helpful or even what was promised. And for heaven's sakes, we can see the red line here is not getting lower; it's getting higher. In fact, as I look at this, we would have been better off under the President's proposal, the Democrats' plan on the stimulus to have had no stimulus at all if you look at what they predicted versus what reality is.

But here is the best part. If you want to talk about helping rural areas, one of these people that has been involved in the government here tells The Post the reason all this money is being spent back here in the Washington, D.C. area is, she says, I'm not sure I ever heard of a government support contractor in Michigan.

Well, maybe that is part of the problem. Maybe if we had some of this actually flowing out to people who need the help and not into more government, things would be better.

So where is the money going? And where are the jobs? Now, we know that on February 25 in an interview with ABC's "Good Morning America" Robin Roberts, our Vice President of the United States, JOE BIDEN, said: "We've got to make sure this is done by the numbers, man. We've got to make sure people know where the money is going. This cannot be squandered. We have an opportunity to get the Nation back to work and back on its feet, and the first piece of that is generating some economic growth here, and we have to do it right."

Now that was February 25. Now, again, here is where they said we would be without the stimulus. Here is where they said we would be with the stimulus. Here's where we are. Here's where we are. And my colleague who spoke earlier about the horrible problem of unemployment—and it is—my home State of Oregon has suffered mightily. But this stimulus hasn't produced jobs out there. It may have produced them to contractors back here, but not out there.

So where are the jobs? And where is the money going? We were promised, the American taxpayers, when we borrowed all this money from China, we were promised that we would know, by golly, this is going to be accounted for. Everybody is going to know. Everybody is going to know. In fact, in a speech on the stimulus at the Brookings Institution on September 3 of this year, the Vice President, JOE BIDEN, said: "Everybody has to account for the money they got beginning October 1. It's going to go up on a big old Web site. We've got a new modern Web site that is going to blow you away in terms of how detailed it is."

So, here is the Vice President. He says, first of all, we've got to make sure this is done by the numbers, man. We've got to make sure people know where the money is going. It can't be squandered. We have an opportunity to get the Nation back to work and on its feet, and the first piece of that is generating some economic growth here, and we have to do it right. And then he said, we're going to track it all. We have a new modern Web site that is going to blow you away. Everybody has to account for the money. They have got to get that, beginning October 1, going to go up on a big old Web site. We've got a new modern Web site that's going to blow you away in terms of how detailed it is.

Well, now, here is a guy who knows what happens with Federal money. You all know Lesko. You've seen him on TV. He says, free government money. Buy my CD. Buy my book. Get the free government money. You would think that even Lesko could track where the money goes.

So, let's look at what happened to some of the money, because I think Americans are asking, where's all this money going, \$787 billion? Where did the money go?

Let's see, in Louisiana, the New Orleans Times Picayune newspaper says Louisiana has seven congressional districts. So Louisianans visiting recovery.gov, that's the Web site that the Vice President said will blow you away with its detail, might find themselves not just a little skeptical, but truly puzzled to see that nearly \$5 billion was listed as headed to Louisiana's Eighth Congressional District, \$2.8 million to the 22nd District, \$1.8 million to the 12th Congressional District, and lesser amounts to the 26th, the 45th, the 14th, the 32nd and even the double 0 district.